



**NEIGHBORHOOD  
COMMERCIAL  
REVITALIZATION  
PROGRAM**

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION DEPARTMENT

NEWSLETTER VOLUME 9 ISSUE 3 FALL 2004

## NCR Coordinators and Staff Visit New Braunfels & San Marcos Mainstreet Programs

On Tuesday, September 21, 2004 six NCR Coordinators and three NCR Staff piled into a City van and headed up IH-35 North. We arrived in New Braunfels a short time later and met Mainstreet manager Jan Soechting. She presented a brief overview of the New Braunfels Mainstreet program, provided a map, and brochure of the area. We set out on foot to tour the District.

Along the way, Jan pointed out several rehabbed buildings, storefront window displays, and historic structures that make up the vibrant shopping district. She discussed the grant she received for street banners along the corridor, a historic mural project, as well as other innovative funding sources that have been explored. Several shop owners were



New Braunfels Mainstreet

on hand to describe their establishment and their commitment to the district. Several properties had office or living spaces above the street level which was an unexpected use in a small-town downtown. We toured the rehabbed Brauntex Theatre, a 1940s vintage movie house in use until 1998. The new owners have completely converted it back to its original lobby and concession area while removing the 2 movie screens and rehabbing the stage area to accommodate community and traveling performances. Over lunch the group was able to discuss program differences with Jan regarding funding sources, Board makeup and incentive programs. There was interesting discussion centered on the mix of out-of-town and in-town visitors to the district and the many events that occur throughout the year that target both groups.

The group then piled back into the van and continued North to meet with Kelly Franks, Mainstreet Manager in San Marcos. We met Kelly in her office just off the square, then set off to see the district. Along the way we were met by her Board President as well as another Board member both of whom own property in the District. We visited the All-Nighter Restaurant which is under construction. This previous funeral home is being rehabbed into an all night eatery, an upscale bistro, with loft apartments above. The property and restaurant owners were on hand to share their experiences as well as discuss the benefits of locating their mixed use development on the square. Rents were roughly \$1.00 per square foot with half the units already under lease. Kelly provided added insight into the value of a streetscape project, as well as the hurdles they encountered along the way. Next we walked to the Senior Citizens Center that is housed in a rehabbed church. With minimal assistance from the City this non-profit has made a positive impact on the community it serves. There were many benefits of this combination field trip, training



San Marcos Mainstreet

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session and networking meeting. The main benefits include providing coordinators the opportunity to network with other Main Street managers who face similar challenges and rewards as well as tour and discuss mixed-use developments, streetscape projects, renovation/adaptive reuse projects which they may decide to pursue for their own districts. Neither district is quite perfect, but each is unique and has made positive progress in the time they have been in the Main Street program. While our NCR Program is funded through a mix of Federal Community Development Black Grant (CDBG) and City General Fund dollars, the New Braunfels and San Marcos Mainstreet Programs receive their funding exclusively through General Funds that are supplemented with outside grants, if awarded. And both coordinators are City employees. Issues include common problems recruiting volunteers, getting businesses and others to buy into the benefits, and convincing them that the process is not always instant yet it is a worthwhile one.



## Mark your calendar. Citibank to Host 1st Annual NCR Gala

Citibank has graciously agreed to host the 1st Annual Citibank gala on November 10 at the Witte Museum. The Gala will highlight the NCR districts and their accomplishments. Citibank has a history of contributing to the NCR Program through sponsoring trainings for the NCR coordinators and staff as well as a monetary grant award for the Operation Facelift Program.

## Jefferson Woodlawn Lake CDC to Honor Roy Huerta at the Annual Cool Crest Golf Tournament October 8

Earlier this Summer, the Deco District lost a great friend and community leader when Roy Huerta, Jr., past president of the Jefferson Woodlawn Lake CDC passed away at age 53. “He was our steady, calming force who always seemed to know how to chart the best course through the roughest waters”, said Paul C. Stahl, the organization’s current president.

One of the events Mr. Huerta loved organizing was the Annual Cool Crest Golf Tournament - where he could show off his favorite miniature golf course and brag about the Jefferson area. It was in this spirit that the Jefferson Woodlawn Lake CDC asked the Huerta Family to consider allowing the CDC to honor Mr. Huerta by naming the event after him. The **Roy Huerta Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament at Cool Crest** will be held on **Friday, October 8<sup>th</sup>** from 6 to 9 in the evening. Everyone is invited for an evening of family fun that will raise much-needed funds for the work of the CDC, the area neighborhood associations. More information is available at: [www.decodistrict.org](http://www.decodistrict.org)



Cool Crest is one of the oldest miniature golf courses in the country and was described by City Search as a “world-class mini-golf Mecca (that) provides challenging fun for the whole family... dripping with atmosphere and kitschy appeal.” The course is located at 1400 Fredericksburg Road. In addition to prizes for the golf tournament, children are encouraged to wear their Halloween costumes for the costume contest. Neighborhood associations will sell refreshments and the event will conclude with a fun auction.

## NCR Awarded \$200,000 from EPA for Target Areas

The Neighborhood Action Department was recently awarded a \$200,000 grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR) Program staff completed the Brownfield grant application last December and were excited to hear the good news this July. Grant monies are currently available for eligible property owners in the 8 NCR revitalization corridors. Properties must be commercial or industrial with the presence or perceived presence of petroleum contamination. Brownfields are sites where expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or perceived presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant. It is important to note that Brownfield sites are no longer required to be abandoned.

The grant will provide additional tools and resources for inner-city revitalization. Abandoned gas stations typically occupy prime real estate at key intersections within the grant target areas. Vacant properties in grant target areas deter the efforts of the NCR Program to revitalize the corridor as a whole. These sites have tremendous redevelopment potential despite being abandoned and underutilized due to the suspicion of environmental contamination, clean-up costs, potential liability and the fear of unknown. In addition to having prime locations, the facilities are often historically valuable and/or have unique architectural features that make them attractive redevelopment sites. The elimination of suspicion and fear through environmental site assessment and clean-up plan assistance will encourage adaptive reuse that contributes to revitalization. Key partners in the proposal submission included the six community-based organizations which participate in the NCR Program.

Working with the non-profit staff and boards, sites will be selected for assessment from within the NCR Program Target Areas boundaries on a first-come, first eligible, first served basis. Criteria will include the potential reuse of the site, potential new business and employment opportunities, availability of capital to complete proposed reuse plans, potential use of the NCR's Operation Facelift Program (a façade improvement grant) to augment reuse project funding, owner participation in the community outreach efforts and conformance with each target area's Design Guidelines and other Neighborhood and City plans.

Grant funds may be used to pay for site assessment reports (Phase I and II reports), provide clean up planning and on site monitoring of air, soil and water. These items often are required when certain properties are bought or sold or when significant construction is to take place. The cost to undertake these items can be quite costly to the current owner or prospective buyer. At this time clean up funds are not available, however sites located inside the City's Empowerment Zone may be eligible for tax deductions of those clean up costs incurred. To find out more about the City's Brownfield program or to check the eligibility of a site you may contact Abigail Kinnison at 207-3971.



### UPCOMING EVENTS

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| ★ October 8—Cool Crest Golf Tournament—Deco | ★ November 16—NCR Networking Meeting |
| ★ October 19—NCR Networking Meeting         | ★ November 25—Thanksgiving Day       |
| ★ November 2—Election Day—VOTE!!            | ★ December 3—First Friday—Southtown  |
| ★ November 5—First Friday—Southtown         | ★ December 21—NCR Networking Meeting |
| ★ November 10 - NCR Gala—Witte Museum       | ★ December 25—Christmas Day          |
| ★ November 11—Veteran's Day Holiday         | ★ January 1—New Year's Day           |



### Operation Facelift Update

There are currently five Operation Facelift Projects under construction, five awaiting contracts and one application currently being processed. Funding is still available and Abigail is always accepting applications. For more info call 207-3971.

**TUNE IN TO TVSA CHANNEL 21 FOR  
"IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD" MON-  
DAYS AT 10:30 AM, WEDNESDAYS AT  
9:30 AM & FRIDAYS AT 3:30 PM.**



## 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL "SIGHTS, TASTES, & SOUNDS OF THE AWESOME AUSTIN HIGHWAY" DEEMED A HUGE SUCCESS

Story by Gloria Johnson-Ramirez

Over 1,000 people attended the Austin Highway Revitalization Project 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual event that was held on September 25, 2004 at Terrell Plaza Shopping Center. Attendance at this year's event doubled from the previous year. The event commenced with a parade down Austin Highway from the Austin Heights Shopping Center, to Terrell Plaza where the festivities were underway. More activities were available for adults and children of all ages. Throughout the day, children were seen having fun with the rides, laughing with the clown, getting their face painted, and receiving free Child DNA Identification Kits. Adult participants enjoyed the art sale, the car show, and everyone enjoyed the entertainment on stage.

The purpose of this annual event is to highlight and celebrate the current revitalization effort of the Austin Highway corridor and surrounding neighborhoods. Austin Highway is becoming a destination place for shopping, eating, entertaining, and quality service. Don't miss next year's event.